

Akuyaku Tensei Dakedo Doushite Kou Natta

Arc 03.5: Intermission

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Chapter 205: Kaldia's Budding Spring | Part 1

Snow thawed early for this year's winter.

The heaviest snowfall finished before we entered the last month of the year, and the already fallen snow began melting. The ice covering the western lakes had already become thin enough for us to restart fishing ahead of schedule.

In this season, I can take the afternoons to slightly relax after taking care of the seasonal trivial domain lord work.

When I entered noble school, I distributed part of my work as the domain lord, so now I'm finally able to take things a little slower. ...Well, after returning to noble school again, I'm going to need to study for my classes, so my free time will disappear quite easily.

Nevertheless, it's all thanks to Oscar that work has been continuing at such high efficiency, as he was able to allocate every task without any needless waste.

There's also the remaining work from Earl Terejia on continuing to improve the quality of life in Kaldia domain as the domain lord's work. However, Oscar's quite skilled at sorting out all the work.

Most importantly, Oscar worked together with the Ar Xia Church's bishops that I hired several years ago to teach the young soldiers in training in the Kaldia army that were still children so that they could eventually help me with document work in the future.

Even if these children wouldn't be able to read difficult sentences, as long as they knew basic math and the necessary vocabulary, the number of people who would be capable of doing deskwork in the military would increase dramatically. Besides, if any of them are forced to retire from the army in the future due to injuries, they'd have a job to fall back on.

I was slowly beginning to try and solve the problem of the personnel shortage in Kaldia. While this spring vacation was rather slow and relaxing, I could still feel the changes happening within my domain.

Tira and the others told me to relax as well and took me out of the mansion. I was completely wrapped in the Shiru tribe's anti-winter clothing as I stepped out into the garden which still had leftover snow. This newly constructed domain lord's mansion had a much larger garden than the one at the Mansion of Golden Hills. The space was used exclusively for the two draconis.

"Ah, Eliza-sama."

"...Mefuri."

A young girl was sitting in the corner of the garden and seemed like she was trying to hide herself as she was trembling. This was the former disposable Rindarl child soldier I brought back to my domain, the magic user Mefuri who still had many mysteries surrounding her.

"Why are you in such a place..."

Although the snow has stopped, it was still technically the end of winter and snow remained on the ground. The temperature outside was certainly not suitable for having fun outdoors.

"Because Eliza-sama and Claudia-sama were both busy with work. I came here to see the draconis."

Mefuri seemed troubled by the fact that she was discovered outside of the room. I didn't know what to say in response, and could only look at her face that was reddened due to the cold.

Ever since I brought Mefuri back with me, she had remained this way. She would only talk to me, Claudia, and the two draconis Rashiok and Vedwoka, while avoiding all contact with everyone else.

In addition to Mefuri, Vanita and the other former child slave soldiers of Rindarl were also now under my guardianship and living together in my mansion. I could understand that she most likely didn't want to see them. She had brought it on herself however, and I couldn't help her.

While I did give Mefuri a private room of her own, whenever Claudia or I wasn't around her, she would always come out to the garden to be away from others.

I would have preferred for her to remain indoors and not shiver outside in the cold like this, but considering her past as well as her mental condition, there was no way I could just force her to stay in her room.

“Before you catch a cold, let’s go back into the mansion.”

In the end, this was all I could say. However, this time Mefuri looked up at me with her murky eyes as she laughed thinly and shook her head.

“Only if I can stay in Eliza-sama’s room. I’ll even endure it if there’s other children around.”

“...Mefuri, please listen to what I have to say. I still don’t intend to make you one of my close aides yet as you’re too young, but even so, nor can I just ignore a child that keeps running away from the mansion to shiver outside in the cold.”

“.....”

Mefuri began pouting as she continued to look up at me.

“You seem to be troubled, Eliza-sama.”

That comment from Mefuri seemed to contain joy for some reason, which caused me to reflexively furrow my eyebrows.

“You don’t want to go back to your room. If staying there is no good, how about going to the village? And, you should dress a bit warmer. How about having Athrun go together with you?”

“Warmer clothes, are you talking about the Artolan style?”

Mefuri was the one who furrowed her eyebrows this time at hearing what I suggested. It seemed that she didn’t have a good impression of the Shiru tribe and the Artolan people.

I didn’t know where Mefuri was from out of the four dukedoms that made up the Rindarl Union, but all four dukedoms had a bad relationship with the former Artolas Kingdom. Since they were at war with Artolas just over a decade ago and wiped the entire kingdom from the map, perhaps the relationship between Artolas and Rindarl could be said to be even worse than that of Arxia and Densel. As someone who was probably born around that time, Mefuri was likely raised by someone that gave her negative feelings towards Artolas.

“This style is much warmer than the cloaks typically worn by commoners in Kaldia. That’s why in the last few years, we’ve begun to produce them for everyone. Ah, there are some differences in the patterns used, though.”

But as I went on about this topic, Mefuri’s expression of obvious prejudice became even stronger.

“...No. I don’t need it. Nor will I go to the village. I’ll just return to my room after all.”

After glaring in disappointment at the Shiru clothing I was wearing for several seconds, Mefuri stood up and said that as she ran off back to the mansion.

As I watched her back disappear, I thought to myself that I shouldn’t leave her alone too much. Whether it was because of my methods that were basically brainwashing, or her own dark past, Mefuri was too unstable. It was far too dangerous for someone who had powers beyond human understanding to be unstable.

Just as I was deep in my thoughts thinking about what to do, something jolted me when it touched me on the cheek and gave me quite a shock.

“.....Oh, what. It’s you, Vedwoka. You surprised me.”

Before I realized it, she had come up beside me and was nuzzling me with her cold nose. Rashiok had arrived as well, and we all seemed to be getting along well with each other as they stood with me in the middle.

“Just what should I do,” I muttered to myself. Rashiok could only respond by nuzzling my face as well.

While stroking his cold and smooth scales, I could only sigh to myself.

Chapter 206: Kaldia's Budding Spring | Part 2

Even though it was now peacetime, various things would still happen. My headaches weren't limited only to Mefuri trying to isolate herself from everyone.

"Eliza-sama, a letter has arrived from Claudia-sama's family."

"...I'll read it."

Just as I was finishing up the office work for this morning, Mrs. Marshan who was in charge of Tira, Reka, and Ratoka's studies brought a letter to me.

This is the second time that I've received a sealed letter from the Rolentsor family since returning from the battlefield.

Of course, the content was about the only point of contact I had with them – it was with regards to finding a marriage for Claudia.

Claudia who's ten years older than me will be turning 24 years old on her next birthday which is in the summer.

...As for the age of 24, even in the royal capital which is more lax on marriageable age, it's considered to be nearing the end of an appropriate age to get married in this country. Since we were in a rural domain like Kaldia with mostly only commoners, I had been putting this off... but in my defense, there was nobody I could think of in this domain that I could put together with her in a "marriage."

Ever since she successfully became a knight before the age of twenty so that she wouldn't have to obey her parents and get married to whoever they wanted, she herself has probably never even thought about the concept of marriage since then.

But in the end, she was still a noble daughter herself, and there will still be people interested in getting married to her.

After I returned from the battlefield at the end of autumn, I had written a letter to Claudia's father. I asked him if he had any ideas about helping Claudia to get married.

However, what Claudia's father believed was that I, since Claudia was a knight now officially serving me, or Earl Terejia since that was who she was serving on the surface, should take the responsibility for her marriage issue.

Unlike the case of where noble daughters would often temporarily work as maids in other noble households, Claudia working as a knight for me was probably a job she viewed as permanent in nature, completely leaving her home.

The ranked knights of personal or national knight orders are considered to be permanent jobs unless they withdraw of their own volition. Since these knights will receive titles of their own, they can be thought of as new heads of their own branch families.

But even so, they still have parents. As for Claudia's parents, when Baron Rolentsor saw that the war was over and peace had arrived, he wanted Claudia to settle down and get married so that she could enjoy the "average" happiness of life.

His letter to me even included veiled criticisms of the fact that Claudia had gotten both of her hands injured while fighting for me. If it wasn't for the fact that she had succeeded in becoming a knight, I was certain that he would have loudly protested because of the custom about how unmarried girls shouldn't have their bodies blemished or something like that.

...Even though I'm someone who personally killed her entire family with her own hands, I can still understand the happiness of having your own family that you can spend time with.

The girl from my previous life was able to spend her last days before death peacefully thanks to her own family. Even if I didn't have the exact same feelings as that girl, I understood that she had what was considered an ideal family. That's why I also hoped to give my citizens the same type of peaceful family lives.

While Claudia technically wasn't one of my domain's citizens, she was one of my closest aides that served me faithfully. I was filled with conflicting feelings of just allowing Claudia to continue down her favorite lifestyle of hot-blooded battles, but also wanting her to be able to enjoy a peaceful life.

That's why I now had the urgent matter of thinking about how to have my upcoming discussion with Claudia.

"Anyways..... sigh. For the time being, I should hear what she thinks first."

As I finished reading Baron Rolentsor's letter and folded it up neatly, I couldn't help but let a sigh escape from me.

Did Claudia herself want to get married? I was quite doubtful of it.

And if she told me that she was willing to get married, just who should I help her get married to?

Of course, she would have to get married to a noble that was approximately equal to her in status. On top of that, she probably wouldn't want to end up leaving Kaldia, it was impossible for her to act like a typical noblewoman and settle down at home, and due to the fact that her personal combat prowess was astonishing, it would have to be an individual who wouldn't have a complex about most likely being weaker than she was.

And as for my personal wish, I hoped that whoever she got married to would be able to rein her in to a certain extent. And I needed a person who wouldn't mind having to move to the Kaldia domain.

Not to mention, it needed to be a person who didn't have any conflicts with the most important families connected to me, the Terejia, Einsbark, my own Kaldia, or the Genas (my most important neighbor) families.

Even if all of the above was satisfied, there was one biggest problem of all remaining – honestly I wasn't even sure if this problem was surmountable – Claudia herself would have to be willing to marry this person.

...Was there even a single unmarried male in this world that managed to fulfill all of these conditions simultaneously?

"Mrs. Marshan, could you please pass along a message to Claudia for me, please? I would like to have lunch together with her today."

Even though all these things were weighing on my mind, I decided to set up a time to discuss this with Claudia and deal with this issue.

Mrs. Marshan agreed to pass my message along. Now then, let's finish off the

last bit of my work and get ready for lunch.

There was only one final stack of documents remaining, and I unrolled the papers as I prepared my stamp.

These were a rare type of document, being marriage notifications regarding my citizens that were planning on getting married for this year's spring.

Spring always had the most marriage applications, which made me wonder if it was because they had the most time to prepare to get married in winter. This year, it seemed that there were twenty-six couples planning on getting married.

The first time that I stamped my approval for the citizens' marriage applications was when I was seven years old. Compared to then, my citizens are getting married at a much higher rate than before.

And so, I stamped my approval on each marriage application that the villages had mailed to me.

That's when...

"...Hmm?Ehhh?"

My hand couldn't help but stop when I suddenly saw the name "Gunther Pavel" written on one of the marriage documents.

.....What, what was this?

Gunther was getting married? That guy didn't mention anything on this topic at all while he was at Fort Jugfena with me! Even the other Kaldia army members didn't bring this topic up at all!

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Gunther's marriage does bother me but Claudia is more important now.

I did sign the applications and approve them but put them into the drawer without putting them out as finished, approved application.—I did tell Gunther that I would affix the seal quickly but there was something I needed to confirm.

I decided to have a proper simple meal for lunch—well, although it was not that simple but that's the image I get when I compare it with breakfast and dinner.

I do want to avoid carelessly upsetting Claudia. Worst case scenario, she might even stop talking to me. Although that probably won't happen.

Even though I want to confirm her will, her family is saying *that* after all. If possible, I want her to easily accept the marriage... But even if she did accept, the problem of finding the partner would still remain. Well, it's not like I don't have any means of finding such a person, though.

Claudia, who did not yet know of her family pestering me for the marriage, happily came to the sudden lunch meet.

I took a seat facing her, apologized for the sudden meet and we started eating.

"It feels like it has been so long since we have had lunch like this in the mansion."

"It has been quite a while, after all. Thank you very much for protecting my territory as a knight this year. I wanted to express my gratitude to you for fighting in the battlefield and for capturing those kids."

On Claudia's hand, the scar she received from the underground passage still remained. It doesn't seem to cause any hindrance in using the spear but it is painful to look at.

It isn't a scar an unmarried woman should bear. Now if I were a man, to take responsibility for the scar, I probably would have to take her as my bride... Well, putting that aside, all the problematic things might have been settled at once.

“A knight’s scar is something like a decoration. You don’t need to worry.”

She said indifferently, tore a bread with her scarred hand and ate it.

She didn’t even try hiding it with a glove like me so that is probably what she really believes.

“It really helps me when you say that... However, when I think that it might ‘cause problems in your marriage—“

As I said that, trying to probe into the matter, Claudia declared that,

“Ahh, that probably won’t be a problem either. I don’t have any intention in marrying into a house which does not honor me being a knight, after all.”

She is too gallant. From the looks of it, does she not think of marriage at all?

In my mind, the letter Claudia’s father had sent kept making a round trip with amazing momentum. A father’s love for his daughter can be very overwhelming.

“Even still, bringing up the topic of my marriage... Taking this chance when the war is over, are you planning on finally getting me married? Or did my father send an impolite letter regarding the matter?”

With an expression which looked like she was enjoying herself, Claudia launched an astoundingly sharp comment.

...Ah, that is true. She was quite clever in terms of aristocratic matters.

Being read like a book just because of a single word, I was left astonished. Due to her usual dumb speech and conduct, I had forgotten but she has quite a skill of reading into people's thoughts. For some reason she displays quite the sharpness when the matter is faced towards her. Well, it is not on purpose..... Right? I would like to believe so.

"No. Teo sent out a notification for marriage earlier, right? And so that made me think of stuff. I would like to ask without beating around the bush but, what are your thoughts about your marriage, Claudia-dono?"

Saying so that the fact that her father was actually pestering me about her marriage is avoided, I directly went into today's topic. It would also be a pain if the topic gets carried away while I am beating around the bush.

But Claudia wore a puzzled expression to my question and slightly tilted her head.

"...Did I, perhaps say something odd?"

"Hmm. Were you not planning on getting me married with Oscar using this chance? Or rather, I had totally thought that was what Earl Terejia was planning when he recommended Oscar to the Kaldia Order of Chivalry."

.....Oscar?

I ended up staring into Claudia's sky-blue eyes dumbfounded for a while there. She glanced back with a smile.

On the inside, I felt like sweat was coming down my forehead like a waterfall.

That's right. There is Oscar. How could I totally forget about his existence? I completely omitted him as Claudia's husband candidate.

After all, it's the Oscar who shows even less interest in marriage than Claudia. Maybe the impression he left on me made me think that if needed, he might go and marry someone of his own choice.

“However, I don’t really have any objection but... there is a condition.”

Claudia started speaking while cleanly piercing her fork into the dessert. Before I knew it, her plate was almost empty. What is with that eating speed? She might be hiding a talent for battle dinner or something.

“A condition, you say. What would that be....?”

I asked while revising my loose posture. Exactly what kind of condition is she talking about?

After all, the very moment when someone is taking Claudia as their wife, the general things people want from wives are far from plausible. What more does she want to add on top of that, I wonder?

“That is....”

Claudia started speaking with a serious expression. *Gulp* I held my breath.

“The person who will become my husband must win in a battle against my elder brother.”

.....

.....

“Alright then, let’s start sending letters to all the relatives at once. I guess I will confirm with Oscar for what it matters as well.”

There hasn’t been a single moment before where I wanted to be praised for my ability to stop myself from slamming my forehead into the table. After all, that is the kind of condition she had which made nervousness seem completely ridiculous.

Seeing my exhausted expression, Claudia replied ‘Hmm...?’ with a puzzled expression yet again.

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Oscar, eh? — Upon hearing the name, I recalled that I did think he was the perfect match but, now that I think about it properly, he too has his bothersome circumstances.

After lunch with Claudia, I went straight to catch Oscar and confirm his situation, or more precisely, the Terejia family's situation.

Oscar, who I had officially appointed as the landlord's assistance when I had entered the school, had always been working here and there.

He has been doing all sorts of work like handling the papers which I approve and Ratoka sorts, having discussions with important people like the bishop, the head of the Shiru family, looking over matters needing attention in the villages and what not...

Although he is supposed to be titled a knight, he has been making Bellway work relentlessly and at this point, he probably does more territorial jobs than me, the lord of the territory.

What on earth are knights? After the Terejia family put on pressure, although I was the one who ordered it, I left Oscar in charge of the territory in my absence. By the way, when I had returned, the tax collection was perfectly done.

Really, what on earth are knights?

Despite all that, he spars with Claudia once every two days and also doesn't miss the combined training with the territory army — I really don't understand how... It is at the level where you would doubt if he was using clones or something...

...And well, so, he has now become an existence whom you must call out to if you happen to find him... Otherwise you'd end up having to hunt around the whole territory for him.

Just when I was about to go to his office to deliver some papers and cards, I happened to find him there coincidentally and, in turn for helping him with the

register, he agreed to talk with me.

If I had let this go, I am not sure when I would get the opportunity again. Well, if I were to consider his mysterious movement speed, if I had left a memo in his office, he would have probably come to my office the next day, though.

And when I began to tell him to finish the registry calculations fast so that we could talk about his and Claudia's marriage, he nodded like he had known and explained what Earl Terejia had in mind.

In short, that is what they wanted but they still hadn't talked about it with the Viscount Rolentsor's family. Assuming that Claudia wouldn't settle down before the state of affair with the neighboring country calmed down, they had not yet officially talked about it.

That is true. She was supposed to be handling the logistical support for the Kaldia army but under these unstable conditions, who knows what could happen in the battlefield. Even if this was talked about before the battle, Oscar was very suspicious the moment he came to the Kaldia territory. No doubt Claudia wouldn't have accepted the marriage.

"I understand the Earl's intentions but what about the Terejia family?"

As known from the Ms Heideman's example, who had been appointed as the head housekeeper of the school dorm, there is some sort of discord between the Terejia family and Earl Terejia.

Even though he is the younger brother of the current head of the Terejia family, he did not succeed to peerage. Instead, he worked at an official job at the royal castle and was given the Earl rank all anew. He is a man who is still single. Even his elder brother, Marquis Rittergau can't probably say anything about him. One could say he is completely independent of the Terejia family.

And being a huge troublesome matter as it is, Oscar is under the influence of both sides.

If only Earl Terejia is also thinking about Oscar and Claudia's marriage, things might get ugly if we are imprudent in moving forward with the marriage talks.

There really isn't anything good about being involved with others' marriages...

Maybe the existence of Eliza itself was born under a star like that...

"As of now, they haven't been told anything except the thing between me and Claudia-dono."

Oscar's position in the Terejia house is extremely complicated.

His grandmother was Marquis Ritelgau and Earl Terejia's half sister. Although she was taken in as his grandfather's second wife later, on paper, it is being treated as if he's their adopted child.

And on top of that, the thing that is making things even more difficult is that Marquis Ritelgau doesn't have a son, a direct descendant. In short, it is an inheritance problem.

The Marquis only has one daughter. Moreover, his grandchild and her two

newborns are all girls.

It seems like he did take in grooms from branch family for his daughter and two grandchild into the family, but the seat of a big noble like his can't be given to a son-in-law so easily like that. However, since their name has been divided like that and a branch family exists now, his daughter or granddaughters can't inherit after him either. It is a situation completely different from mine.

And as such, in the current Terejia family, only three males are remaining. Marquis Ritelgau, Earl Terejia and Oscar.

It seems that even if they were to take a son from a branched family for such a big noble family's head, no matter if they are taken in as the present head's son, grandson or groom, their position is inferior to that of Oscar.

Due to this complicated situation, even though Oscar is the Terejia family's major contender for the head of the family, he is ostracized by the son-in-laws of the family. However, he is being supported by others in the family. But he is too much to handle for Marquis Ritelgau. So the only one who suits his convenience in the family is Earl Terejia.

The reason Oscar couldn't become a knight at Yugfena and couldn't fight at the front lines at the war is because of this.

If he was simply an illegitimate child of the head or an adopted child, they would've easily accepted him to marry Claudia's family, which is also a branch family. After all, she also holds the title of a knight.

However, if he were to be the next head of Terejia family, his wife must only be of an esteemed origin, for example the daughter of a high Earl.

"It seems like granduncle and others are doing something recently. They probably understand how I would prefer working hard over here rather than go back there. And so, I think there should be no problem.... I mean, if there was, I would have probably been taken back to the house long ago."

Oscar stated his thoughts as seriously as he is but finished it off with some sarcasm and a bitter smile.

Certainly, if he was to be treated as the next head of the Terejia family, he surely wouldn't have been able to do all these here in this countryside, which would hurt his reputation.

"I see. Then, if we take that there are no problems for now, do you have any objections to this marriage?"

After all, we are talking about marrying that Claudia here.

....No, if we were to consider if Oscar himself has all the things one would normally want in a husband, I wouldn't be sure either. I mean, after all, he is a workaholic who goes far beyond the level of madness.

But even still, if we were to think about it considering this country's general knowledge, Claudia is the one unusual here.

"I.... That is....."

Oscar was lost for words.

.....How do I follow up on this? Claudia's cute parts... Nope. Can't think of any immediately. In fact, what comes up is how she blew away Gunther in that arm wrestling competition over food. Yeah.. can't really say that now, can I...?

“Umm... this might change the topic a bit but... After coming to this area, the fact that I do not miss spending time with her once every two days... What do you think about that, Eliza-dono?”

“.....? I think you guys are pretty enthusiastic about practice. But be careful not to fall ill.”

To the sudden question, I answered tilting my head a bit. I do think it is very Oscar-like habit to cram in—communication with a colleague, taking a breather and appropriate exercise all in one but really... cramming in all those things into one, yep, he sure is insane.

Oscar looked at me like he was about to object to something but then just muttered, “Well, I guess you are still 14 years old, after all....”. What? What do you mean by that?

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He asked a odd question which I didn't quite understand but it seems like Oscar doesn't really object to this marriage either.

Well, they live in one of the area under the territory lord's mansion and don't really go out into the high society, so noble, lady-like skills will probably not be demanded from Claudia. In fact, if you just think about it in terms of income, she might just be an amazing wife..... Probably.

For now, I guess it is alright to think that there will not be any impediments to the marriage as long as no problems arise from Oscar's side — the Terejia house.

If that is the case, then as I thought, the problem is...

"...And that's what she said.."

"Ah.... I see..."

When I told him about the condition Claudia spoke about, Oscar wore an indescribable expression.

I was probably making a similar face, as well. If someone were to look at us, they wouldn't think we are talking about marriage at all.

"A duel... eh. That too against Natarnael-dono who is renowned for his strength among the Imperial Knights."

It seems like Claudia's brother had been promoted to the Imperial Knights before I knew it. He was supposed to be in the military police squad maintaining public order so that is quite the promotion. He might have also joined the king's army.

"Do you think you have a chance at winning?"

"Impossible. The Imperial Guards are the best among the elites. If it was a death fight, it would've been different but when it comes to royal court sword skills, I do not hold a candle against him."

Oscar flatly declared. Remembering the blunder at the school last year, I

couldn't help but wear a bitter smile.

But still, this is bad. Who would have thought the biggest obstacle to this marriage would be one of Claudia's relative, when the one asking her to get married is her father.

"However, the situations have changed since that promise. How about discussing the matter with Natarnael-dono?"

That is true. Her brother wouldn't want his sister to be unmarried, now would he?

I nodded and decided to advance this marriage talk seriously.

First, I decided to send a letter to Earl Terejia.

When I handed over the letter to Paulo, who had now become a veteran messenger soldier, and told him to go deliver it to the capital, he looked crestfallen and hung his head.

"Hm? What happened? Did you request for a vacation or something?"

When I was about to go and check whether the request papers were checked or not, Paulo panickedly shook his head left and right.

"Ah, no... it's not like that. Just that there is a girl I am getting along with recently... Ah! No! It's not like I am neglecting this job for that or anything!"

.....Looks like there is a person who is enjoying the post-war peace here too.
(?)

I should better think about the marriage rush and the surge in birthrate which would accompany that. Well, since the quality of life now is very different from the previous world, I probably don't need to think about it that deeply....
Probably.

“But... it’s just that.. the girl is from the Shil tribe and it is pretty difficult to earn their trust....”

“Paulo, that bastard, recently it seems like he is being doubted for cheating! I am jealous that he is popular among the girls but now I am starting to feel pity towards him.”

Said a soldier, who just happened to pass by.

Paulo, who has now grown into a fine man, with his gentle and amiable personality and the title of a messenger soldier being that young, has earned himself quite the popularity among the girls of the village.

Of course, now that the new mansion is closer to the village and the soldiers need to go there quite often, the girls of the village have got their guards up. Among them, the Shil tribe’s guard seems to be quite hard.

Due to the tribe’s tradition, it is hard for someone who is not from their tribe to marry one of their girls.

“A round trip from the capital will take at least three days, won’t it? Three days.... They were finally starting to open their hearts to me.. what will I do if it goes back to square one....”

Paulo said, looking all gloomy with his shoulders down. I decided to give up on entrusting him with the job and told him with a sigh, ‘Okay, okay, I understand. I will leave it to someone else’. Because I have known him for quite a while now, I end up making him run more errands unintentionally quite a lot even when I could ask other soldiers to do it.

“S-sorry, ma’am.”

“It’s fine. A lot of the soldiers being single was starting to become a small problem, after all. If you too have someone you like, I won’t bother you unnecessarily.”

As the Kaldia army was in the frontline of the war, a lot of the soldiers were lost. Now the number of male and female in the territory are close so if most of the guys stay single, a lot of the girls would have to remain unmarried too, which I would like to prevent.

“M-ma’am! Thank you very much! I will do my best to make her like me!Hm? What do you mean by ‘you too’?”

He bowed overcome with emotion but then slightly raised his head with a question.

“Gunther’s marriage application was delivered... To be honest, it didn’t seem like that at all from his behavior to me but surely you have heard about it, right?”

“Eeeh?! What is with that?! I didn’t know!!”

Hmm? Even Paulo who is well known among the territory army is unaware, eh?

Well, it’s Gunther we are talking about here, after all. There is the possibility that he is hiding it because he will get ridiculed.

.....But even still, there is one point which bothers me.

Recalling the paper which I had left in the drawer, I decided to confirm the matter.

Bothersome as it may be, there are no laws to accept divorce in Arkshia. If there’s something bothering you, the key is to investigate beforehand to avoid trouble.

Chapter 210: Kaldia's Budding Spring | Part 6

After entrusting the letter to a soldier, I returned to the office and pulled out Gunther's marriage certificate from the drawer.

The number of people who can write are limited so the person who wrote this is probably not someone related to them but the village mayor or an expert. Gunther's parents' house is already gone and he doesn't belong to any village now so naturally this certificate was probably delivered from his wife's village.

After confirming the name of the Neza village's mayor at the end of the document, I decided to immediately verify the matter. Can't possibly keep this marriage certificate on hold for so long, after all.

And as I was going, I thought I might as well take Mefuri along with me as she seemed free. I went to the room she was supposed to be in.

"Mefuri. I came to deliver the laundry..... Ah, Eliza-sama."

I encountered Vanita along the way, who was calling out to Mefuri with his awkward Arkshia language while knocking on the door.

Looks like he was helping the maids. I didn't really ask him to do anything specific so he is apparently doing it voluntarily.

"Vanita?"

For just a moment there, his face distorted very awkwardly but then he stepped back a few steps to let me stand in front of the door.

Mefuri was particularly avoiding Vanita. To be honest, I didn't think Vanita would be thinking of meeting Mefuri either but it seems like I was wrong.

".....Mefuri, it's me. I am opening the door."

I did knock and call out to her but as Vanita was with me, she didn't reply. Without paying it any heed, I opened the door to find Mefuri in front of the open window, staring at me.

Well, from the looks of it, she doesn't have a weapon so even if Vanita tried to enter she probably would've only tried to escape. Seems like she doesn't

plan on causing a ruckus.

“Seems like Vanita came to deliver the laundry.”

“.....Put them in front of the room. Vanita doesn't want to meet me either, right?”

What are you doing, the victim is trying to meet half way and you, being the wrong-doer, are rejecting?

“Mefuri, go out and take your own laundry yourself from Vanita.”

Enduring my urge to sigh, I ordered her clearly. With a frozen expression, she sluggishly moved away from the wall.

And then she timidly took her laundry from Vanita, who was idly standing in front of the room.

.....is that really avoiding contact? It would have been one thing if Vanita was the one avoiding, but why is Mefuri the one avoiding?

I hear her magic gets more and more broken the more time you put into it. She can't possibly turn the other into a bomb from just the trivial contact from everyday life.

Vanita was watching the assailant, Mefuri, be extremely frightened, with an indescribable expression.

Sighing in my mind, I thought about what I could do about these two. Mefuri and Vanita will have to live together in this mansion for the next few years. I was planning on giving them some sort of a job or educating them once they get used to living here but it won't start if they don't even meet face to face and keep avoiding contact.

.....Alright. This might be a bit forceful but I need to change the situation.

“Vanita. Do you have any plans after this?”

“Eh? No, I don't, ma'am.”

In response to the sudden question, Vanita answered with difficulty.

“Then prepare to head out. Mefuri, you too. Accompany me to Neza village.”

Ignoring their piercing glances, I leaned against the wall and urged them to

start preparing in silence. To which they reluctantly obeyed.

After the lord's mansion was shifted to the center of the territory, Neza village looked a bit more lively with more people coming and going. It seems like the woods between the highway and village has been cleared in these few years and now the merchants travelling along the highway drop by quite a lot.

"F-feudal lord-sama. Is there a problem with this village?"

"I just visited since I needed to confirm something. It is close to a private matter so you don't need be so serious over it."

As Vanita and Mefuri couldn't ride horses, we rode on the back of draconis, which quickly drew the people's attention.

We had finally wiped away their fear but it seems like they were still on their guard. This probably won't ever disappear. These hellish memories the Kaldia family has created will probably not be forgotten in a long time and until then, these wounds won't heal.

"Private matter.... you say?"

"Yes. Actually, I had a little doubt about a marriage certificate submitted from this village."

As we were guided into the mayor's house, I briefly explained my business here. Wearing a perplexed expression, the mayor said, 'was there any defect in the certificate?'.

"No, it is about the marriage certificate of Naje Take and a soldier of the territory army, Gunther Powell but..."

"Ah! If you are talking about Naje's marriage certificate, I remember it clearly. Naje is... do you not remember? When you were still small, a group of thieves from the neighboring country came invading.... She is one of the girl who was kidnapped at that time."

"That incident seven years ago?"

"Yes, that. Ever since that, it seems like they have harbored a fear against men... But I thought that finally her heart's wounds have healed and she looked quite happy when writing the marriage certificate."

I couldn't help but smile hearing the mayor's words.

.....I see. Seven years ago, when West Alfena church's spy, Deiferias was still hiding within the country. The two girls who were hurt in the incident... even though I do not remember their names, I do remember them.

To think one of them would be Gunther's spouse....

Certainly, the territory soldiers have frequently patrolled the villages after that, so it's very much plausible. Gunther also visited the villages personally a lot.

"However, due to those details, I think I had paid even more attention in writing that certificate...."

"There are no errors in the document. Just that the soldiers in the army are saying that they heard nothing about Gunther getting married, you see. And so I just came to verify it once but... There is the possibility of Gunther lying low, thinking about the bride."

"That is true... Gunther-san certainly visited the village quite frequently but he didn't really act all that intimate with Naje..."

It seems like the mayor noticed the strangeness and went 'Hmm?' and tilted his head a bit. A couple who has submitted a marriage certificate recently... to think they don't even let the people close to them know of their relationship... it is just too unnatural. Under normal circumstances, it would get leaked like Paulo's case.

"Shall we talk to Naje herself once?"

The mayor suggested nervously, to which I agreed.

Chapter 211: Kaldia's Budding Spring | Part 7

The face of the woman called Nadjé was somewhat familiar to me.

Upon attempting to drill further, she had initially responded with a blank expression, and had then adopted one more aligned with confusion. She had nevertheless offered me a bashful smile and ushered me into her home.

It was an odd feeling. Apart from the small children and region soldiers, there weren't many people who were willing to come into contact with me and not even wince.

"Just what happens to be the issue? Do you have some sort of business with me?"

"Yes, Nadjé. About that..."

The Village Chief was decent enough to be the one to explain things to her. With him treading on glass, it only served to make me feel all the more awkward. Thanks to his input, however, it was much easier to evoke a change in Nadjé's reactions as lent an ear.

When asked of her relationship with Gunther she grew a bit embarrassed, but was still frank in her admission that she pined after him while still being somewhat wary of me. But her somewhat calm demeanour disappeared the second the Village Chief decided to ask about the marriage registration, almost as if shattered.

"Eh... Mr. Gunther and I... Marriage? Huh... What?"

The wheels in her head seemed to stop turning about halfway through, and the Chief and I turned to look at each other. The girl herself was supposed to be at the very centre of the issue, but she didn't seem to have an inkling of what had happened. It was fairly obvious that there was no subterfuge mixed with her bewilderment.

... Which meant that the one we should be asking was probably her father.

The marriage laws of Arxia differed, depending on the region. The new laws passed down by Earl Terejia and I stated that the two parties to be wed were

required to allow the village they willingly lived in to act as a sort of mediator, a place where they would whip up the marriage registration contract. Both parties would sign said contract, and it would have to be submitted to the lord of the lands.

Before the laws were revised, however, any laws concerning matrimony had been based off of aristocratic conduct. The agreement needed for a marriage was not to be between the two parties concerned, but rather between the Lord and the acting father or guardian of the would-be bride.

“Village Chief, exactly who was the one to request the marriage registration?!”

“Come to think of it... It was Nadjé’s father. I... I’m truly sorry, I appear to have been lacking in my review...”

“Not at all. A parent can act as a default proxy for their child. There’s no reason to fault you over what happened at the time of registration.”

That really wasn’t the core of the issue; that lay more in the fact that Nadjé’s name had been signed into the registry. If Nadjé was really unaware, then that meant it had been forged... and that whoever forged it would have to be confronted by the law itself.

“Um... What... What should I do...?”

Having grasped the basic outline of the situation, Nadjé’s face had gone pale. I gently laid my hand onto her shoulder and assured her that everything would be fine.

“You’re not to blame for this incident. In fact, since you were the one whose signature was forged, I’d consider you more a victim than anything else. I can’t say for certain whether it was Gunther, your father, or perhaps both; in any case, you have the right to wish for the punishment of whomever it was that made the forgery. It should never be wished on you.”

Well, the father’s punishment was not something I could give at my own discretion. Rather, it would most likely be decided through a lengthy talk within the household itself.

Nadjé’s response to my explanation was an expression that made it rather a

clear whether she had understood or whether she hadn't, followed by a nod. Well, I supposed it was all good and well, provided she understood that things wouldn't get too far out of hand.

"For now, I'd like to speak to your father..."

It was high time to break the ice.

Just when I realised that Rashiok's head had suddenly risen from sleep, ears perked, the pitter-patter of scurrying feet went from the corner of the room to the entrance door.

"Hey Nadjé, you there – Woah! Rashiok?!"

Rashiok jumped, front legs aiming for the shoulder of Gunther, who had rather conveniently decided to drop in just then.

It was needless to say that Gunther, having no way to defend himself or to avoid, was toppled to the ground.

Rashiok let out a joyous cry, and Gunther, still befuddled, slowly picked himself up and saw all of us gathered inside the house.

"Huh? Why're you... the brats... wait, Village Chief?"

"Aaah, Gunther. You came at just the right time. Sorry to do this during all this confusion, but there's something I want to ask you... actually, before that, you have a snow snake in that bag, right? Mind selling it to me?"

With a barrage of demanding coos, Rashiok dipped down against the bag that hung down Gunther's back. That mirrored the reaction common to being presented with Rashiok's most beloved delicacy; the snow snake.

With a rather unusual expression of foolish bewilderment, Gunther murmured his acquiescence and pulled a snow-white serpent out of his bag. Huh, it was still alive, too. Considering that it was still hibernating, it would probably fetch a pretty penny.

Snow snakes had a penchant of becoming scarce once the snow had melted. While I didn't know whether it was true what was said about them, namely that they dined on the snow itself, they nevertheless descended the Amon Noor alongside the snow. They normally disappeared before the snow had the

chance to do the same. A little flavour was lost in those specimens that were occasionally found during spring, but they tasted delicious once fattened up.

“Rashiok, don’t tell me this is how you always get Gunther to give you food.”

I tried to hammer it into the Wolf Dragon as it partook of the snow snake, tail wagging in sheer delight. Rashiok’s ears drooped down sullenly, and I could see Gunther giving a strained grin from the corner of my eye.

Chapter 212: Kaldia's Budding Spring | Part 8

"Uuuh... Right, that's it. Gunther, there's something I wanted to ask you..."

With both hands around the now moving snow snake that had sprung from the bag, I decided to resume the conversation.

He would probably want to understand the bizarreness of the situation as soon as he could. Gunther responded in the positive, with a small 'Sure' and a nod. Wishing to avoid beating around the bush any further, I decided to cut straight to the point.

"Thing is, someone handed in a marriage certificate with your name and Nadjé's inside."

"...What?"

At that moment, Gunther's voice and tone had gone soft and low. I could see both Nadjé and the village chief twitch back a bit as they restlessly peeked over to Gunther.

Just as I was about to warn him that it was best not to make expressions that dangerous, Rashiok's head – its owner still fixated on the snow snake – grazed against my side, and my back became recipient to the thrashings of a rather long tail. It eased the atmosphere a bit, admittedly.

"... Yes, I thought this was more of a one-person ordeal, but I really can't have falsified documents stamped with the seal of approval, can I? I had it looked in to."

Gunther did not give a single response, and instead let the bag slung over his back ungraciously drop to the floor. A heavy silence took over the house. Gunther was giving off oddly intimidating vibes.

The space between his eyebrows wrinkled as he fell into a deep silence, and Nadjé could only barely open and close her mouth, again and again.

"... Exactly what do you mean by 'falsified'?"

"In the Kaldia area, it's necessary for both the man and woman meant to

marry to be willing. The very thing that shows that willingness is their combined signature. Nadjé, on the other hand, doesn't know about the certificate and is therefore unwilling. I mean that we have a document with a forged signature on our hands."

"I see... Look here, boss... You think I could talk this over with Nadjé for a little bit?"

Gunther was madly scratching away at his scalp, almost as if his head itself was in pain. The oppressing air dispersed, and the others let out a breath of relief.

Possibly due to the dissipation of tension, Rashio's head began shoving against me repeatedly and forcefully, almost as if to tell me that we'd done enough here. Nose pressing against the snake that drooped from the palm of my hand, the thrashing against my back became even more violent

"It is, of course, best for the two parties in question to talk it out. Had some measure of ill will or malicious intent been involved, then we'd be going about this differently. But I'm, in essence, an outsider. Actually... even if that was the issue, I'd still have to apologise and leave this seat. Hold on, Rashio. Don't push me. Stop."

Now I was forced to speak while stumbling about like some half-wit, and Rashio was to blame. Nadjé and Gunther said nothing as they looked my way, but then simultaneously burst into unsure smiles.

Now outside the house, I decided to quickly deal with the snow snake. For my travel companions mostly, since they seemed to have time to kill.

Adamant on the simplistic choice of skewered, grilled meat, I decided to borrow the village's bonfire and improvised further by using a branch as a make-shift spit.

I asked Mefuri to step on the end of its tail, restraining the snake so that it couldn't writhe about any longer. I then used my short sword to cleanly lop off its head.

"W-Woow..."

Seeing the decapitated snake still wriggling and writhing about, Vanita backed

away, looking rather taken aback.

Mefuri and I turn to one another. Mefuri appeared to be of one mind with me, seeing snakes as a type of animal clearly meant to be eaten. Looked like my own thoughts really came across.

“Mefuri, could you do me a favour and borrow a pan and some salt from that house over there?”

Snakes were much more delicious as a soup. Snow snakes especially.

“Understood.”

Mefuri, having already seen the Village Chief’s wariness towards me and therefore able to extrapolate the more minute details, gave me an obedient nod and ran to the nearby house.

Vanita threw me a glare that screamed, ‘But I could’ve gone too!’. I deliberately ignored it. Why? Simply because Mefuri, once she realised that she was too little to carry the pot by herself, would come back soon enough.

Mefuri, her gaze dancing between Vanita and I as I preoccupied myself with chopping up the snake, eventually adopted a somewhat reluctant approach and spoke to Vanita.

“Um... Vanita. I can’t really take the pot, so... D-Do you think you could help me out?”

“Huh? Oh... Sure.”

Well, it looked like my original plan to bring the two of them outside with me and have Mefuri start talking to Vanita out of her own accord had been a success.

My protective gaze lingered on their backs as they raced for the house. Then Rashiok invaded my field of vision.

“... I get it, I get it already.”

Heaving a sigh, I tossed half of the snake’s head and body into Rashiok’s mouth. And here I’d thought that I could skin it, at least... Well, its worth was bound to sink quicker than it did during winter anyway, so I supposed I could let it get eaten this one time.

Making use of the pot Mefuri and Vanita carried over, I removed the bones and entrails of the snake and threw it in along with salt and water.

Letting a thick tree branch fall in the meantime, I broke it up to pieces and chiselled out its insides to make a sort of utensil. I'd decided to make spoons while I was at it, and had even prepared my short blade.

"... Excuse me."

"Hm?"

"How can be used to that much if you're a domain lord? Do the nobles in Arxia train to infiltrate foreign forests or something?"

There was a rather pure perplexity underlying Mefuri's question as she presented some herbs that looked like they might add some taste to the meal.

"Ah... No, not really. There was just a time when I lived in the barracks of the region army for a while. The region soldiers back then just sort of made their own dinner from what they found."

I had hesitated for a brief moment before responding, unsure of how to answer. Then I realised that there wouldn't be much in the way of deception, and decided that I might as well explain to her the bit about my past where I'd been an apprentice soldier of sorts.

"I didn't really have a lot of stamina back in the day either. Couldn't even protect anything right. I think I ate pretty much anything that could be eaten. The regions just happened to be pretty poor at the time too. So, snakes aside, the meat of animals like squirrels, rabbits, and birds were handed over to the populace... It wasn't easy to keep up the spirit to take ingredients back to the barracks and cook them either, so it was pretty inevitable to make the tools on the spot and eat there."

"Oooh..."

I'd spoken with a tone of fond reminiscence, but now it wasn't just Vanita who turned toward me with a distasteful expression; Mefuri did the same thing.

... Vanita, with a mind forged by a higher education was once thing. But when Mefuri, who'd probably had to go through the same things I had did the same, I

couldn't help but feel a little put-off by the whole thing.

Chapter 213: Kaldia's Budding Spring | Part 9

The snow snake has a unique and smooth texture. The closest thing it can be compared to would maybe be the gray layer between the salmon's body and skin? Though the former has almost no smell and the taste isn't as strong... I almost never ate salmon though.

"Mmm, tasty...." Mefuri unintentionally murmured as she felt the soft texture.

Immediately after, I added a few herbs to the snake soup to change its taste, their citric feeling was quite refreshing... She took her time savoring it.

Vanita had a troubled expression as he looked back and forth between me and Mefuri while holding his bowl, though he stopped staggering with Mefuri's words, and took a sip of the liquid.

"Y-yummy...!" He proclaimed after a small wait.

He murmured with an absurd amount of amazement. Could you please avoid being so expressive about it when talking about good food?

The snow snake is an excellent ingredient that can be much tastier than a rabbit if cooked properly. Well, it's not a very common meal, so it's understandable.

"Mefuri, could you share the herbs?" I extended my hand to receive them.

Vanita watched while Mefuri gave them after a moment of staggering, I wanted him to taste the snake by itself, so it would be meaningless to have added the herbs from the start.

"T-thank you." Vanita said after I passed them to him.

As he received the herbs, Vanita kept on looking back and forth between me and Mefuri. After some hesitation, he tried talking to her.

"... Back when you grew up, was it common to eat snakes in the place you lived in?"

Mefuri seemed to be panicking at his attempt to start a conversation, she directed me a pleading gaze, but I couldn't help her, as I didn't know where she came from in the first place.

Considering the dark color of her skin, it is unknown rather she really is from Rindarl or not.

When I brought her to live here, I heard about what kind of life she went through while growing up, but I don't know any details.

What I know is essentially that she was brought up as a spy, learned magic whenever possible, and had the knowledge of how to escape through mountains and forests drilled into her head.

When I shrugged my shoulders to her plea for help, Mefuri resigned herself to it, and bit by bit started putting an answer together.

"I don't know if other people ate it, but whenever I got hungry, snake was the first thing I went after... It was easier to catch than other types of meat."

That is certainly true, it's the same reason I ate snakes in the first place.

"I started eating other types of meat recently, but... I think snake is the tastiest."

"... Is that so?"

Vanita nodded awkwardly. Well, it's hard to feel at ease when hearing about Mefuri's past.

"What about you?" She asked.

"Eh?" He replied.

"What kind of things did you eat?" She pressed on.

Vanita staggered when being asked back, I'm amazed he didn't expect it, his surprise seems a bit exaggerated.

He seemed unsure on how to reply, it's understandable though, as Vanita still has things hidden even from me.

I didn't question him about this kind of thing because I found no opportunity to do so, but perhaps my lack of probing is what made him talk so little about himself?

"Ah, I... I had to study a lot of etiquette, so I ate a wide variety of meals to remember how to handle each of them..."

Judging from his expression, I'm pretty sure he ate his fair amount of luxurious meals, which obviously led to an awkward silence when it was said right after Mefuri talked about how she had to struggle to fill her stomach each time.

... This kind of atmosphere ruins the snake's taste.

"Maybe your positions will be reversed in the future."

I couldn't help intervening into their talk, they both turned towards me with confused looks on their faces.

"I'm still thinking on how you two will spend your future in here, but you'll probably go to the lord's manor, Mefuri in particular would only make use of lessons in etiquette, as she already knows basic survival skills. Vanita on the other hand might receive education in the army."

They both trembled and started exchanging looks with one another, and with this, I dropped my eyes back to the bowl on my hand.

... Well, those are the most likely possibilities anyway, while I have no intention of mixing those two with the slave children, both Vanita and Mefuri will probably live in the same place, I can't let them continue being scared of one another.

The children were all gathered from completely different places, so the death of others didn't create a grudge between them, only fear.

However, that fear wasn't the only thing to move the children, many of them followed Mefuri voluntarily, as they had no trust in Arxia, the possibility of

escape would make them move regardless of Vanita. Considering this, it is pretty likely that he would be taken to the place she was supposed to bring him to.

I won't say they should interact as if nothing of that happened, but they need to be able to make minimal conversation at least.

At the moment, both Vanita and Mefuri don't have much in terms of personal achievements, but I have hopes they'll step up to the task. When spring comes, the river thaws and starts flowing again, but we can never know if it will lead to a valley or a fertile land.

... I must be getting influenced by the spring, I never wanted work as a matchmaker like this. I would never had to worry about it if I was still looking for snakes every day.

Chapter 214: Kaldia's Budding Spring | Part 10

Gunther and Nadjé finished their talk at about the same time we finished eating and tidying up.

While Nadjé was very embarrassed, Gunther unsuccessfully hid his own embarrassment behind a frown. A tall man came together with them and apologetically bowed to me.

"It was not done with bad intentions." He said.

"It is no worry, rather, did you reach an agreement? What should be done about the marriage registration?" I replied.

"About that... They just sanctioned it."

"Oh... Ahn... Congratulations on your marriage Gunther."

It took me a while to reply because it was too much to take at once, I didn't expect them to accept it.

Gunther curtly replied with a "Hmph." and then, as if he couldn't hold back any longer, began to briefly explain the circumstances. The tall man occasionally opened his mouth to supplement a few parts of the story, apparently he is Nadjé's father.

Apparently, Gunther planned to marry Nadjé from the beginning. The one that was unable to get the consent was Nadjé.

Nadjé is scared of men, even now she is only able to talk to those she is close to.

With this in mind, Nadjé's father had already given up on finding a man to marry her, and she even passed marriageable age already. The men of her age from this or the nearby villages ended up marrying other girls due to being frightened by how Nadjé's father overprotected her.

Without anyone noticing though, Nadjé started opening up to Gunther during his frequent visits to the village.

Nadjé's father ended up worried about Nadjé because Gunther was the only man close to her, but he was from the military, and constantly moved back and forth from the capital, it wouldn't be surprising if Gunther had extramarital relationships.

Her father felt that if she got closer to Gunther, Nadjé would be completely unable to get over her fear, so he talked to Gunther last winter and gave him an ultimatum that if he wasn't willing to take her hand in marriage, then he should never get close to Nadjé again.

... I felt pretty overwhelmed, he protected his daughter way too much.

Gunther being Gunther decided to propose her, I wonder how much he cared for the surrounding opinions when doing that, however, it seems like he got a good reputation on the village on recent years, as the man that was part of the military and rescued Nadjé in the past.

Her father having no expectations of her ever getting married had no dowry prepared, and that only if Gunther was truly sincere about it would he allow her to marry.

"... Do you think you can just marry a girl like that whenever you want? Nadjé is poor." Her father had said.

Gunther got somewhat shocked at that and scratched his head, he completely forgot this kind of ruling existed as he hadn't really planned on getting married before he met Nadjé. As a show of good faith though, he signed a marriage certificate in advance, so as to let them marry once things were ready.

What they didn't expect however, was that Nadjé's mother, who didn't know how to read but knew how a marriage registration looked like, found the certificate signed by Gunther, and immediately got delighted as she had already given up hopes on Nadjé getting married. She immediately made Nadjé sign it, who also didn't know how to read, so had no idea what she was signing, and brought the signed paper to the mayor.

Which led to the situation of both Nadjé and Gunther being completely clueless about the Marriage registration being sent to me.

... What can I say? It seems like a story straight from a drama, put them on some fancy clothes and they should be able to make comedy opera with this.

Well, if the people involved agreed to it, then the problem is settled.

Gunther is going to discuss when to hold the marriage with the whole family now, so I decided to go back to the Lord's Mansion.

With this Gunther's matter is solved, but there is still one troublesome marriage to take care of.

"... Are you alright? You look tired, but happy." Vanita asked, and I nodded in return.

With how much I have been moving around, and needing to deal with this opera-like marriage, of course I would be tired, but marriages are a happy occasion by nature, especially Gunther's, which is my direct subordinate and also my former teacher.

It was only natural for me to give him my blessing.

Chapter 215: Kaldia's Budding Spring | Part 11

It was by the time when the snow has melted and wild flowers has started to bud when Claudia's brother, Nathanael, arrived at Kaldia.

After some greetings, I escort him to the village of the new citizens, which can also be seen from the current domain lord's mansion we were in.

After a while of walking on a suddenly vibrant street while being followed by curious gazes from the citizens,

".....Hmm, I see. So this is the village that the people from Artolas made. Still, I can't believe that such splendid village can be establish in just a few years....., it's truly amazing"

Nathanael stated as he looked back at the road we just passed with fascination.

"Indeed, it's one of the things Kaldia is proud of. Because despite of being unaccustomed to their new environment, everyone still did such a great job."

I nodded with a hint of embarrassment.

In order to retain my composure, I put all efforts to ignore the fact that a girl who was weeding the field on our side suddenly stood up and run elsewhere. Ugh.... I'm sure this will spread all over the village now that I've been heard....

"I heard that many of the excellent troops of Kaldia helped with the construction, is that true?"

"Hm.... ah, yes. The army was included in most of the construction"

Kaldia's military was used in developing this village in the first place. After that, soldiers from the Shiru tribe also became part of the construction.

Even now, the military would be the first one to move if there's any expansion or rebuilding, or even cultivation and irrigation works within the domain. That's the reason why the construction skills of Kaldia's army are high.

.....Most of the men who came from Artolas belongs to the Shiru tribe. Since people such as the Sellion farmers lives outside the Bandishia plateau, they

quickly received Dandel troops attacks. That's why many men sacrificed themselves in order for the women and children to escape.

This is one of the main reasons why the Shiru tribe remained as the usher for the new citizens, though it's also partly because of their influence during the time where Artolas still existed.

"It's a nice village. Not because it has a great view but because its people are all in good shape"

".....Thank you"

I sincerely expressed my gratitude to him who was smiling happily as he let out a praise.

I really think that he is indeed a sincere and outstanding person. It's not like I was doubting it, since he's the person that Claudia look up too and completely trust.

Rather, It's because he's like that, that's why I think so.

I cannot predict what will happen to his awaiting duel with Oscar.

Whether he will win, or not.

All I can do is to watch and see for myself.

I can't help but feel nervous.

"Now then, let's proceed with the match"

Back in the domain lord's mansion, after the introduction of Oscar was over, both of us swallowed the urge we're feeling as Nathanael remove his top as he states those words.

This feeling of exhaustion, it's completely the same with Claudia. As expected of siblings.

"..... excuse me but, how about having lunch first? you still haven't taken a rest from walking around the village"

"Ah, there's no problem. Also, my movements will become dull if I eat so it's better to finish some light work out first"

Light..... Light? Did I not mention that it's a duel?

I clearly stated in the letter that it will be a “duel”.

And of course, a duel is a serious match. It doesn't just have a high risk of injury, there's also a possibility of death involved.

Above all that, Claudia's engagement is at stake here. I can't think of it as some light workout.....

While feeling uncertain, Nathanael nonchalantly laughed at me.

I currently have a confused expression on my face, as if wanting to ask what's so funny

Beside him was Claudia who has the same expression. Upon this, mine and Oscar's shoulders dropped as we gave in.

“.....I understand. We shall finish that first then. I was thinking of using the courtyard as the ground , is that alright with you?

“Yes, of course. It won't take long so no need to worry.”

I saw Oscar as he casually wrap around my back. The sword he was holding furiously shakes as he grips on it.

Well, It does sound like he's being looked down upon. It's the same as saying “ Fighting with someone like you won't take long”

But probably, no, surely Nathanael didn't mean any harm. don't feel like he's looking down on him.

.....I'm sure that Nathanael is also aware of their difference in strength since Claudia guaranteed his way of making prediction and it's accuracy

Although I didn't think that he was the kind of person that difference to his opponent, even though he doesn't mean it

Just what in the world is he thinking.....?

My stomach started to get heavy as I feel more and more nervous. When I was about to unconsciously wrap my hands around it

.....I noticed Claudia who's currently preparing her spear and gauntlet. The hands that were about to wrap to my stomach almost held my head instead.

“.....um, Claudia..... What are you doing?”

“Hm? What do you mean?”

“Uh..... Why are you picking up your weapon even though we’re about to begin their duel?”

“..... ? Why, you ask? Aren’t Oscar and I going to duel with my brother together?”

.....\

.....\ \

.....\ \

Wait a minute.

What did she say?

It’s my first time hearing that.

Look. Oscar, who probably feels the same way as I do, looks completely drained!

Even though the duel is about to begin, what are you gonna do about this!?

Chapter 216: Kaldia's Budding Spring | Finale

".....Do you have anything you would like to say?"

That scene was just too unreal and surreal — said Ratoka later on, after witnessing from the sides.

I was standing with my arms folded, taking a daunting stance, in front of 3 men who were kneeling on the ground.

It goes without saying that the culprits behind this incident are Oscar, Claudia and Natanael.

"U-Umm... I am sorry! It was just too fun synchronising with Oscar to exchange blows against brother..."

"I am sorry... I guess I got a little too excited going seriously all out for a while there..."

"I am sorry. I felt like I would die if I hadn't blocked or deflected their moves."

"I understand. Oscar, you go to the dining and set up a table before us."

I couldn't really keep him here, making him feel responsible for this situation as he already looked like he was dying so I let him go early. Well, for Oscar, I guess I can't help but feel kinda... sorry.

After seeing Oscar go into the mansion after bowing, I shifted my vision towards the Rolentsor siblings, who were dripping cold sweat. Then, I looked towards the courtyard... or the place which was the courtyard, the place which hadn't even been a year old after being made.

It was made with Rashiok's playing ground or my training place in mind so it isn't like there were any decorations there.

There isn't—but, however—

What must you do such that it turns out like this? (I feel like they might have thrust their spears with full force) There were cracks, ground collapsing, and in some places rising too—it was a complete wasteland.

The tiles laid out in the back were smashed to pieces, the terrace was covered

in a cloud of dust—even the refreshment lawn was in a terrible state.

If you don't call this a disastrous scene, what would you call a disastrous scene?

...Or rather, what is this? Is this really something a human can produce? Oscar did quite well to even stay alive in the midst of that stormy fight. Even with just that, I feel like he did quite well.

It was a dreadful fight.

It was supposed to be a courtesy duel in terms of the Imperial sword or spear technique. And in reality, it was in fact not far away from that standpoint... Although I can't really come to terms with it.

"Ummm... Eliza-sama?"

"What is it?"

"Are you angry...?"

In response to Claudia's question, I just pouted disappointedly.

Although she asked with a taciturn expression, if I were asked if I was angry or not, I feel like my answer would be a bit different.

Even more than that, I am astonished by the Rolentsor siblings to be able to create such disaster... Is it because I am feeling it is very irrational?

It feels like the good ol' scenes from the Shounen mangas.

However, I can't really be sulking about it all the time.

After letting out a sigh, I called them by their names, 'Natanael-dono, Claudia-dono'. They straighten their backs to the limit, as if they were flicked.

".....I plan on holding the ceremony for Claudia-dono's wedding here, in this courtyard."

""We will clean this place up with all our might!!""

In response to the synchronized reply by the siblings, I again let out a deep, deep sigh.

Well, with this, I guess the first part of the spring has come to an end.

Good grief... or rather, feeling kind of relieved, I let out yet another breath, different from a sigh this time.

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